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ABSTRACT

Using the successful reading program of Kansas City, Missouri, as a basis for discussion, the author makes suggestions for future federal legislation and for administration of federally funded educational programs. The success of the Kansas City program is examined, and specific improvements are suggested. Recommendations for future Title I programs include that (1) future legislation should require administrative entities at the school district level, (2) instructional objectives should be specified and delimited, (3) federal funds should be appropriated to specific instructional programs, (4) eligibility for such programs should be broadened, (5) programs should be tailored to the local communities, (6) programs other than Title I programs should be considered supplementary to Title I programs, (7) preservice teacher training specifically geared to inner-city programs should be expanded and improved, (8) early childhood education programs should be expanded, (9) community involvement should be expanded, and (10) programs to prepare schools for racial integration should be instituted. (AL)

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STATEMENT MADE TO THE

UNITED STATES SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

July 15, 1971

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

by

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UNITED STATES SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

July 15, 1971

In 1966, in grades one, two and three, about 3,000 pupils enrolled in schools located in the poverty stricken areas of Kansas City, Missouri were given a well known reading readiness test. Slightly more than eighty percent of these pupils scored below the average level set by the test publishers. In 1968, a reading program was designed and implemented for the children in these grades, which was intended to meet their specialized needs in this most crucial area of educational skills. By 1970, test scores of about 3,000 pupils, attending these same grades in these same schools and coming from the same background of economic and social depression, earned achievement scores in reading which placed them at the national norms published for this test. Moreover, the second grade group, those pupils who had participated in the program for two years, placed slightly above the published norms and the norm for the total second grade population in the Kansas City, Missouri schools. An analysis of the achievement score data revealed the following major findings:

Reading achievement scores increased significantly for each class entering the program by grade one.

Mean achievement scores in both Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension were at grade level for published national norms.

The average growth in grade equivalent scores for the second graders exceeded one year in both Vocabulary and Comprehension when we measured the growth from first to second grade.

In addition to these findings, there were other important developments. Systematically gathered data revealed a substantial upturn in the teachers' achievement expectations for the pupils, as well as strong indications of other

positive attitudinal changes. To put this another way, the syndromes of despair and futility, usually characteristics of those of us who struggle with the educational problems of the poverty stricken areas in all the major cities of this country, were considerably lessened for us. Now, we in Kansas City feel that if the momentum already generated can be sustained, we shall make even greater and more significant inroads into the formidable educational problems which deny equal educational opportunity to a sizeable segment of the population of the United States.

There are several important lessons to be learned from the Kansas City experience. First, a functional administrative division was organized and charged with the responsibility of improving the educational plight of innercity children in Kansas City. Secondly, a clear cut goal, the improvement of achievement in reading, was set and the program organized to reach this goal. Thirdly, while the finances provided by federal aid were significant, they fell far short, and still do, of meeting the comprehensive needs of pupils who must grow and develop in poverty, subject to the debilitating societal forces which impede their educational careers. Consequently, priorities had to be set, and the program organized so as to supply enough intensity to develop a chance for success. In Kansas City, the first priority was the development of reading skills. The rationale here is that reading is central and crucial to all educational progress. Fourthly, the results of the Kansas City program substantiate the position of the Division of Urban Education of the Kansas City Schools; that innercity children can learn as effectively as more fortunate children if they are taught properly. In other words, we believe that an instructional program geared to the specialized needs of these children, sensitively administered, resourcefully implemented, and responsively delivered, can produce the desired results. We reject the position held by some that there is a genetic inferiority which contributes to the failure of these

children to learn. We also reject the theory that the negative forces rampant in the environments of these children produce permanent and irreversible learning impairment. As potent as these forces are, they can be overcome with an instructional program adequately supported and intelligently delivered. Further and very importantly, it can be done through the public school systems, despite the myriad of problems which they now confront, and contrary to the hypercriticism from which they suffer.

The Kansas City program is multi-faceted. However, there are at least three features which seem to us to be essential. Effective and ample instructional force must be created. This was accomplished by the use of lay aides to the teacher, and a training program to upgrade their competencies. Although many federal guidelines and much federal legislation encourage the training of teacher aides by colleges and universities, we have retained the responsibility for the training programs. This decision arose from the logic that relevance would be most easily preserved if the educational institution responsible for the delivery of the educational program also assumed responsibility for the training of its personnel. Implicit in this decision, of course, was a rejection of the idea that the seats of all educational wisdom are located at the higher education levels.

Secondly, we recognized that the reading program would have to be delivered through a strategy which would permit considerable opportunity for individualized instruction. Consequently, we adopted a programmed reading series.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important, a continuous inservice training program for teachers was designed. Great care was given to finding solutions to educational problems encountered by the teachers in the classroom. Professional and other resources were turned toward this activity as a first priority item for their application. Again, while we sometimes profitably collaborated with the colleges and universities, we retained the basic prerogatives for program design and direction.

In Kansas City we know that we have not completely solved the educational problems of the innercity, but we have made a very significant and encouraging beginning. We are also confident that if provided with adequate financial resources, we will be able to produce comparable results as we expand to other subject matter areas. Expansion, however, will call for great assistance.

First, and most fundamental, there needs to be a substantial increase in the funds allocated to the federal compensatory educational programs. The justification lies in the fact that at the present time we are reaching only about one-half of the school children who qualify, even according to the very stringent guidelines set forth in the rules and regulations which implement the legislation. Not only is this the case, but a genuine concern for equal educational opportunity would dictate that the other estimated two-thirds of the innercity pupil population should receive consideration. This would seem to be altogether desirable, for this is the segment of the innercity population who do not manifest all of the symptoms of economic and social depression to the extent that they beset the currently eligible group. With perhaps a relatively small boost, the educational careers of these children could be lifted across the line which separates success from failure, and productivity from dependency.

The inadequacy of available funds now placed in the effort to relieve innercity educational debilitation has been mentioned earlier. When the paucity of these funds are held up against the total needs of these future American citizens, the fabric of their support is exceedingly thin. It has been estimated that about $1,000 per pupil above the regular per capita school district expenditure is needed to arrive at effective solutions to the problems. In Missouri, we are now about to implement the third year of the State Department of Education's directive to increase per capita expenditures in the Title I program to $250. In order to accomplish this, we must <u>reduce</u> the number of eligible children served!

There are other features of the legislation, which when contemplated from our vantage point, ought to be carefully scrutinized with a view toward change. The legislation is so broadly written in its various provisions, that except for the opening statements, the Title I legislation cannot decide whether it should provide health, medical or dental programs; a community action program or a supplement to the welfare allotments; it is unclear whether the legislation is intended to be an employment program or a political action program. Recent guidelines, related to community involvement, further obscure the thrust which should be made by programs operating under the Title I legislation. At least in part, the profusion and variance of the types of programs sponsored by Title I support accounted for the dismal results of the evaluation made after the first five years. The evaluation was based, and rightly so, on the advancement of educational achievement. However, if educational achievement is a rational criteria for evaluation, the legislation and guidelines should establish limits which restrict program activity to direct instructional measures intended to elevate educational achievement. It is true that the target group of school children have other needs, some of which may be crucial to educational progress. But to attempt to meet them within the scope of legislation having instructional goals as ambitious as Public Law 89-10 and as inadequately funded as its main thrusts are, can be defined as folly. These needs should be met by other legislative instruments.

Aside from financial considerations, stipulations requiring that services be delivered only to those children within an innercity school who qualify according to the eligibility criteria, not only forces a stigma to be attached to participating children, but increases the cost of the services, and makes program operation an administrative nightmare. It is also inconsistent with other federal legislation for education which prohibits identification for aid recipients which may stigmatize them. Even more fearful, is the very real prospect that the required identification

of eligible children will force Title I programs to operate in the old idiom of classic remediation. The history of this ill-fated educational technique testifies much more eloquently than I to its long and painful years of dismal failure. When the consequences of these guidelines are contemplated, we quake and tremble in fear that the program effort under Title I has also been consigned to the doom of spectacular failure. Of course, this event will be erroneously used by the critics of compensatory education as proof that money spent to provide equal educational opportunity is wasted. Then we shall undergo yet another ill-based theoretical onslaught by the learning geneticists and the environmental fatalists. Meanwhile, an equal chance for educational development will continue to be just a myth for those pupils with able potential, but who, by virtue of the insensitivity of the enterprise and the ineptitude of the educational delivery systems, will fall victim to the discriminatory features woven into the fabric of our society, and end on the junk heap of dependability.

In Missouri, one of the measures used to establish eligibility is the extent of educational depression as evidenced by achievement scores. Therefore, the second grade, which has done so well this year, cannot be officially qualified as a group next year. Only those members who are located at the bottom of the achievement distribution will participate. In other words, we are forced to forsake these poverty stricken children as soon as they show the first glimmer of improvement.

The outcome is predictable. We know, from our experience with Headstart and other compensatory education programs, that these pupils will relapse into the characteristically depressed achievement patterns of the economically deprived. We know that to crystalize these early gains into permanence, we need to have sustained programs, closely coordinated and synchronized as the children move through the grades. The misguided rationale, which forces the ouster of pupils as soon as they begin to show some progress, ignores our past experience, and

indeed, defies logic.

Inevitably, the researchers and evaluators will look closely at long term gains which are traceable to Title I educational programs. And justifiably, they will condemn those programs which show only spurts of progress, and then retrogression to the achievement patterns operative prior to the beginning of the effort. In this sense, the guidelines which set this limitation to the Title I programs are self-defeating, and blind to the fundamental objective of providing equal educational opportunity.

Legislation intended to help depressed school children should be sensitive to the strategies needed for the most efficient delivery of services. Without being at all disparaging, I can say with security that the large school districts have bureaucratic administrations. This is not in and of itself bad. On the other hand, I am sure that the experiences of the members of this committee will lead you to agree that bureaucracies sometimes need encouragement toward flexibility. The point to be drawn here is that guidelines and legislation should reflect the understanding that the implementation of a special program which can adequately respond to the needs of a specialized group will need meaningful help. The administrative authority will need to be free to become innovatively responsive. It must also be located high enough in the organizational hierarchy to institute meaningful change without being overruled by those who would cling to the status quo. To accomplish this, program support should be large enough to design an activity of sufficient scope to merit the location of program administration at a high level. In Kansas City, administrative responsibility for innercity educational programs is located in the Division of Urban Education, organized specifically for that purpose. It had to be done without specific legislative support, and it took about three and one-half years, but it is crucial to the delivery of a sound program. The outcome has been most gratifying. The administrative staff of the Division of Urban Education

was drawn from the only bona fide reservoir of knowledge about innercity educational problems. Our administrators were chosen from those teachers who had reputations for successfully teaching innercity pupils. Once released, and properly directed, their competencies were exploited so that now, instead of benefitting only a relatively small number of children in the individual classrooms, their talents are spread over the entire eligible innercity population, and they have earned a national reputation. Admittedly, our status remains precarious, but with continued success, it will become more difficult to dislodge us.

Two other issues need to be mentioned here; community control, and the financial plight of the large city school systems.

Someone, who is an influential part of the lawmaking process, needs to bring some rationality into the effort to "involve the community." It needs to be understood that the mere granting of pseudo power to innercity communities does not guarantee that the quality of educational production will improve. Indeed, many of us are beginning to believe that this development is a shrewd divisive tactic. We are approaching this conclusion because we have seen only strife, confusion and divisiveness in the black communities in particular. To write legislation, supposedly intended to give innercity people a voice and some real power to participate in the educational destinies of their children, has so definitely operated in the opposite direction that one must at least consider that this move was deliberately calculated to thin the power of the innercity people. In no other legislation is there such enormous room and such direct encouragement for loosening all of the negative and extraenous motivations in the communities as in the legislation designed to provide equal educational opportunity. In Kansas City, we have official commendations from both federal and state authorities, commending us for our conscientious work with parents of poverty stricken children. Even though we have received these sanctions, we are still ambitious to improve this relationship,

for we have had firsthand experience with the enormous contribution parents can make in a collaborative arrangement between school and parent. However, we need to be free from the tactics of demonstration and disruption which siphon off energy and time. The crucial consideration here is that this legislative effort must firmly eliminate extraneous political ambitions. It must reject those organized forces in the community who would use the education of these children as pawns in their quest for personal and political power and advancement. Our children represent a far too priceless asset to passively permit this to continue.

I will stop with these few general observations, because I know that other persons who appear before you will avidly embrace the delegation of power to the communities. I have merely tried to raise a caution. The legislation and guidelines must be written so that they fix responsibility and authority and accountability in a rational manner. To fail to do this will only increase the confusion by developing to an even stronger degree those power elements whose dedication to the advancement of the educational progress of poor and minority group children is at best questionable.

There is no question but what the integration of the schools is the only means to reach the fundamental democratic ideals for the education of children. Before elaborating on this point, the Senate Committee should understand that integration, as defined for the purposes of this statement, has a radically different meaning than the mere mixture of pupils from different racial and ethnic backgrounds in the same student bodies. True integration would be achieved in my view when the following conditions pertain:

1. Since integration can occur only when and if complete access to participation in school life is made accessible without discrimination, a comprehensive program should be designed to prepare receiving schools for the experience of true integration. Such a program should precede

the actual mixing of the pupils by one year. The program should aim at eliminating the discriminatory practices which will surely develop in the absence of effective measures to prevent this expectation. The result, of course, is that the minorities in the schools will be devastated. Moreover, the programs to eliminate the practice of prejudice and discrimination should continue for a modest period of three years following the date that racial and ethnic mixture is introduced into the schools.

2. Legislation requiring the integration of schools should clearly delineate the objectives of the orientation programs and the inservice programs occurring during the three year period referred to above.
3. The staffs of the schools should simutaneously become representative of different racial and ethnic backgrounds and the administrations of the receiving schools should evidence racial and ethnic pluralism.
4. Some stipulations designed to reduce the extravagant degree to which educational institutions now rely upon test scores as a consideration in the design of the educational programs should be built into the legislation in a coherent manner that does not allow bizarre interpretations, and consequent grouping of children which will defeat the aims of true integration.
5. There may be some short, thin line of demarkation between a recommendation and advice. I merely want to make this statement: The design of additional legislation intended to enforce and facilitate the law of this country as it relates to the integration of schools should include sizeable input from the professional teacher organizations. To fail to do this will be tantamount to ignoring the bourgeoning power which these organizations possess.

These recommendations are by no means intended to be comprehensive, but in my view they must be considered and acted upon if we are to truly provide an equal educational opportunity in a way which honestly enhances significant movement toward the stated democratic ideals of the United States of America.

I am going to conclude at this point. Among the documents which accompany this statement is a list of specific recommendations related to the issues I have raised.

I sincerely thank you for this opportunity to address the Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are presented in this form in response to Senate Committee staff to be specific and succinct.

1. The legislation and guidelines should encourage if not mandate an administrative entity at the school district level, which is strategically located so that it can be effectively responsive to the needs of innercity children. The establishment of such an administrative entity should be related to the size and scope of the compensatory education program operated by that school district.
2. The commonality of innercity educational problems in the large cities permits the establishment of specific instructional goals. Consequently, the administration of the federal compensatory education programs should aim, with support from legislation and guidelines, at the establishment of coherent objectives. At the same time, the possibility of the wide divergence of program designs directly related to instruction and achievement should be severely curtailed. Time limits should be set for reaching these goals. Such a plan may very well be developed so as to be in line with appropriate accountability considerations. In my judgment, the problem of improving reading achievement must be solved before other depressed educational areas can be rationally attacked.
3. Federal appropriations should be related to specific objectives which are established for certain periods of time. The appropriations should then provide adequate resources for reaching the goals. The eligibility of innercity pupils for participation in compensatory education programs should be broadened, by liberalizing the criteria. Identification of individual pupil

participants should be discontinued. Once eligibility is established, it should be permanent through the elementary school years, at least.

4. Since it is apparent that by far most of the country's children will continue to be educated in the public schools for the forseeable future, the direction and responsibility for the design and implementation of compensatory education should be given to the public school systems. Enough latitude should be allowed to the localities to recognize and exploit the idiosyncrasies of a particular district to the benefit of the program.

5. Recently (within the last two years) guidelines accompanying educational programs other than those provided under Title I of Public Law 89-10 have virtually mandated that Title I funds be used in support of these efforts. Title I should be considered the central educational effort, and the other productive programs (there are several) as supplementary. The supplementary efforts should have adequate funding.

6. There is little or no encouragement evident that would lead to the belief that the competencies of new teachers who now leave the teacher training institutions will improve. Even though they are fully certificated, we can expect to receive these teachers who are grossly lacking in their understanding and ability to successfully cope with innercity educational problems with no alternatives but to assign them to innercity schools. Provisions for the training of these innercity teachers should be made so that there is adequate financial support, and so that the training activity relates to specified educational goals. The responsibility for this effort should be given to the school districts, where the responsibility of operating the program effectively is now and will continue to be seated.

7. Early childhood education programs should be more strongly emphasized and more ambitiously provided for. The curriculum, at least for the early years of

operation, should emphasize the development of language facility and reading readiness. Close coordination and synchronization with the Title I program should be required. Early childhood educational measures should look toward programs for innercity pupils which begin at least by age three, and continue through the kindergarten year.

8. If community involvement and participation is to continue to be a major consideration, it should be circumscribed in the legislation and the guidelines so that the professionals are not released from the responsibility to make decisions which will hold them accountable. The motivations of politically powerful organizations and individuals which are extraneous to improving the educational achievement of children should be severely curtailed. Parent participation directly supportive to the instructional effort should be strongly encouraged.

9. The distance still to be traveled on the road to complete and meaningful integration of the schools is great. There is ample reason to question whether it will be achieved if we do not take specific and definite steps in preparation. As integration is attempted, specific programs calculated to prepare school personnel should be inaugurated at least one year prior to beginning the integrated situation. Subsequently the progress to eliminate discrimination in every aspect of school life should be monitored. Programs to reach this goal should be continued for three years. The total effort, since it will bear directly upon the professional fate of teachers, should solicit input from teacher organizations.